

VZCZCXRO7826
PP RUEHFL RUEHNP RUEHROV
DE RUEHRO #2504/01 3551408
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 211408Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9590
INFO RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0743
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9167
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2826
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2972

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002504

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DEPT FOR S/CT -- RHONDA SHORE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EFIN](#) [KCRM](#) [KHLs](#) [AEMR](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: 2007 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 146856

¶1. (U) The following is post's proposed text for the Italy portion of the 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism.

¶2. (U) There were no successful large-scale terrorist attacks in Italy in 2007. Italy aggressively investigated and prosecuted terrorism suspects, dismantled terrorist-related cells within its borders and maintained high-level professional cooperation with its international partners. U.S. counterterrorism cooperation with the Italian government has remained excellent.

Italy's law enforcement and judicial authorities continued to be engaged in counterterrorism efforts, with several noteworthy cases during the reporting period. In June, authorities issued arrest warrants in Milan for nine Tunisian nationals, including Ben Khemais Essid Sami, for recruiting militants in Italy for training in Afghanistan and providing logistical and financial support for a Milan-based Salafist terror cell from 1997 to 2001. In July, police arrested three Moroccan nationals in Perugia on terrorism charges, the culmination of a two-year investigation. The individuals, who included the Imam of the local mosque, were in possession of chemicals used in explosives-making and jihadist training equipment.

In October, police arrested Iraqi national Saber Fadhil Hussein on charges of leading a cell that sought to procure ultralight aircraft and anti-tank rockets from Italian and other sources for use in attacks against coalition forces in Iraq. Also in October, a Milan court re-sentenced Mohammed Daki, a Moroccan immigrant accused in 2003 of recruiting suicide bombers for Iraq, to four years imprisonment in absentia. (He had been expelled to Morocco in 2005 under the so-called Pisanu decree allowing the Interior Ministry to expel terror suspects). Maher Bouyahia and Ali Ben Saffi Toumi, both Tunisian, were sentenced in the same ruling to six years imprisonment, overturning a January 2005 decision by a Milan judge that acquitted Daki and the others on the grounds that they were "guerilla fighters" and not terrorists.

In October, a Spanish court acquitted Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed, an Egyptian national currently serving an eight-year prison term in Milan, of involvement in the Madrid train bombings. This verdict does not affect his sentence in Italy, where he was found guilty in 2006 of subversive association aimed at international terrorism for having recruited suicide bombers in Italy for Iraq. In November, as part of an international sweep involving British, French and Portuguese authorities, police arrested 11 suspects (primarily Tunisians and Algerians) across Northern Italy and charged them with having been members of a Milan-based cell

that recruited and sent suicide bombers to Iraq and Afghanistan. In December, a Milan court convicted Egyptian-born Imam Abu Imad and ten others of promoting jihad and recruiting potential suicide bombers. The members of the group received sentences ranging from two to ten years.

Domestic anarchist-inspired and extreme-left terrorist groups presented a continued (albeit small-scale) threat despite Italian authorities' continued efforts to dismantle their organizations. In February, in a string of simultaneous raids across northern Italy, police arrested 15 people suspected of membership in the operational wing of the Red Brigades. Police found arms caches during searches and determined that the cells were planning attacks on leading political figures, including former Prime Minister Berlusconi.

The Italian government continued to make use of reinforced counterterrorism legislation enacted in 2005, which facilitated the detention of suspects, mandated arrest for crimes involving terrorism, and expedited procedures for the deportation of persons who may be involved in terrorist activities.

The European Court of Human Rights is reviewing the Italian government's policy of expulsions and deportations without judicial review. In May, the court blocked the expulsion of two Moroccan nationals who had been acquitted of terrorism charges in Italy, citing the risk that their rights would be violated upon return to Morocco.

Italian authorities have stated publicly that many radical Islamist groups in Italy are inspired by or connected to al-Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM) and other jihadist groups and

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use Italy as a logistical and financial base. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)-affiliated organizations do not have a major presence in Italy but are thought to have links with affiliated charitable organizations that maintain Italian branches.

In August, Parliament passed a law reforming the intelligence services. The new law, for which implementing regulations are still being developed, changes the structure of the services, brings them under the authority of the Prime Minister's office, and lays out more precise guidelines governing key issues such as parliamentary oversight, management of classified information and collaboration with law enforcement and judicial authorities.

With respect to financial aspects of fighting terrorism, Italy aggressively identifies and blocks financial resources destined for suspected terrorist individuals and groups. Italy is one of the most active countries in the world with regard to the number of individuals and organizations submitted for designation to the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee against al-Qaida and the Taliban (73 individuals and 15 organizations). Since 2001, Italian authorities have frozen Euro 500,000 (USD 720,000) in assets belonging to individuals or entities in Italy suspected of financing terror activities. Italy works closely with the U.S. on money laundering matters and information sharing. As an active member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Egmont Group, Italy cooperates actively with other foreign governments as well.

Italy cooperates closely with the U.S. and other international partners in the fight against terrorism. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Italy takes active part in Counterterrorism Committee (CTC) and 1267 Committee deliberations and is a strong proponent of multilateral cooperation in countering terrorism (particularly the General Assembly's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force). Italy is also a leading financial contributor to the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Counterterrorism Prevention Branch.

Italy hosted the meeting of the EU's group of six (G6) Ministers of the Interior with DHS Secretary Chertoff in May to discuss cooperation strategies in the fight against radicalization and terrorism. Within the G8, Italy plays an active role in the Rome-Lyon Group and the Counter Terrorism Action Group (CTAG), within which Italy leads an initiative to enhance counterterrorism security measures in airports in the western Balkans.

Italy is an important partner in the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Container Security Initiative, and is an initial partner nation of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The U.S. and Italy have concluded initial negotiations on an HSPD-6 data sharing agreement and signed an Aide Memoire on data sharing on December 4, 2007. In May 2006, the U.S. and Italy signed a new treaty on extradition and mutual legal assistance, which, when ratified by the U.S. Senate, will allow for joint investigative teams, easier asset freezing and faster sharing of financial information.

Italy is a vital participant in NATO's Active Endeavour naval mission against terrorism in the Mediterranean, and is an important contributor to international military missions in Lebanon (where it leads UNIFIL), Afghanistan (where it holds Regional Command-West and rotating command of the Kabul Region), and Iraq (where it plays a lead role in the NATO Training Mission), among others.

Italy plays an important role in international partnership initiatives with the Broader Middle East such as the EU's Barcelona Process and the G8's Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA), in the framework of which Italy co-sponsors the Democracy Assistance Dialogue.

Italy contributes training personnel to various regional counterterrorism training centers such as SEARCCT (South East Asia Regional Centre on Counterterrorism) in Malaysia, the JCLEC (Joint Centre on Law Enforcement Cooperation) in Indonesia, and the African Union's Anti-Terrorism Centre in Algeria.
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